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Visual Psychological Anthropology in the Field

All film is artifice; even person-centered films that tell "real life" stories are crafted. Through a closer look at film as process, this part of the book demonstrates how a VPA approach influenced the final shape and feel of *40 Years*, *Bitter Honey*, and *Thorn* (Lemelson, 2009, 2015, and 2012, respectively). We discuss the methodology, events, quandaries, and insights emerging at three stages of filmmaking: in the field, in editing and post-production, and after the film's release. This chapter, on VPA in the field, addresses Javanese and Balinese psychocultural beliefs, practices, and habitus and how they intersect with our interview method. We then address our own subjectivity and turn to the specifics of filmic representation with regards to the impact the camera has on participants and questions of visual reflexivity. This focus on the visual and sensory aspects of filmmaking is carried through to the following chapter, on editing and post-production. There we discuss narration, editing for emotional impact, and a cinematic toolkit for ethnographic representation including archives, art, and sound.

The final chapter of Part IV is on ethics. While ethics are considered throughout the entire filmmaking process, some missteps only become

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evident in retrospect, after the film is done. Furthermore, many of the ethical points discussed are in regard to film screenings and distribution so the topic is placed after production and editing in the approximate chronology of our filmmaking.

Parts II and III dealt with the ethnographic content and theoretical analysis; Part IV discusses the craft and strategy of filmmaking. But while these parts are separate in the book, in practice, the method and the findings are mutually supportive. The following chapter on editing, for example, demonstrates how the iterative process of finding and developing a coherent narrative helped home in on what was truly at stake for participants. In this chapter, the strategies of longitudinal person-centered interviewing both allowed for meaningful discussion of participant experiences of trauma, gendered violence, and stigmatization and provided insight into Javanese and Balinese psychocultural responses to challenging events.

Adapted PCE Interviews as Primary Field Method

Psychological anthropology addresses the structural and superstructural but does so via the personal, experiential, and subjective. Therefore, while other genres of visual anthropology can be oriented to the observational (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2009), the sensory (Castaing-Taylor, 2009), or the material (Brown, 1967; Jell-Bahlsen, 1994), VPA uses interviews as a major structuring element. The method is a psychoanalytically based format known as person-centered ethnography (PCE), adapted for film. PCE uses longitudinal, open-ended, semi-structured interviews that allow participants to reveal salient aspects of individual subjective experience and phenomenology (Hollan, 2005; Levy & Hollan, 2015). As described throughout this book, we have repeatedly found that new and often contradictory – or at least, much more nuanced – material only comes after multiple interviews and film shoots, and more often than not, this new material provides a critical perspective on what is at stake for each person (Fig. 7.1).

Fig. 7.1 Suciati being interviewed

The interview setting, particularly if filmed, is an artificial environment alien to the daily flow of experience. Even for those participants familiar with interviews on mass media, the form and length of PCE can be daunting. The basic methodological premise is that revisiting topics of significance for participants over the course of many sessions and over many years, will move past this fieldwork and filmmaking artifice – or, exploit certain components of this artifice – to get to the "truth" of personal experience. While the ends may not be therapeutic for participant nor researcher, and PCE disclosure is not equated with therapeutic disclosure (Hollan, 1997), the areas of interest and the means do overlap with psychoanalysis. The ethnographer is:

> [A]ttempting, in much the way an analyst would, to use the open-ended interview format to elicit behavior … revealing of important psychological issues and concerns. To examine, for example: how wish and desire

> may reinforce or contradict moral conscience, the extent to which interviewees are consciously aware of conflicting desires or goals; the ways in which interviewees avoid some topics of discussion but actively promote others; who or what interviewees identify with and who or what they are repelled by; the extent to which interviewees assume responsibility for different aspects of their behavior, and so include them within the scope of their conscious "selves," or attribute some responsibility to beings or forces outside their conscious control. (Hollan, 2005, pp. 462–463)

For many, the experience with or, indeed, the very idea of "talk therapy" and, hence, an interview method drawn from it, may be unfamiliar. This was certainly the case for our participants as psychotherapy, while on the rise, remains uncommon in Indonesia. The psychocultural concepts and assumptions that support the process, such as "authenticity" (Handler, 1986; Theodossopoulos, 2013), "catharsis" (Scheff, 1979; Taylor, 2003), or the idea of "uncovering" and "contemplating" sorrow in order to "get it out" (Wikan, 1990), are likewise culturally specific.

Furthermore, being interviewed repeatedly and at length in front of a camera about personal experience and intimate matters – in the case of this book, traumatic experience, violence, and stigmatization – is certainly a culturally and personally unusual or unique experience for most participants. This VPA application of PCE for film makes the differences between the therapeutically inspired interview method and actual psychotherapy even clearer. In therapeutic conversations, both questioner and respondent (i.e., therapist and client) understand the conversation and relationship to be that of a dyad. This sense of dyad may to a certain extent hold in typical PCE, if the interviewer is fluent in the language – while certainly the respondent is aware of their participation in research, the conversation could conceivably unfold with just anthropologist (with notepad and recorder, say) and respondent present.

In visual person-centered ethnography, there can be additional performative layers to disclosure, especially if, in addition to the anthropologist, a film crew is sitting nearby. Here, as opposed to a private therapeutic immersion in disclosure and self-discovery, the participant is keenly aware of how their responses relate to the expectations of the anthropologists, film team members, family and community (members of which

might be present for the filmed interview). Even if no one else is physically present in the interview beyond interviewer and interviewee, the film or video camera acts as a physical metonym for these broader "audiences." This awareness of such real or potential viewers underscores any potential disclosure. A participant's pre-established habitus, their conventions for social interaction, emotional expression, image management, and personal disclosure – and different models for behavior onscreen – are then filtered through the VPA/PCE process. The given responses of participants, who may have been subject to past or ongoing trauma, violence, and/or stigmatization, are colored by these psychocultural models and conventions during any interview. They are also colored by conscious or unconscious psychological processes – if not direct symptomatic sequelae – implicated in coping with, remembering, and recounting such traumatic or painful events. The VPA method, then, both operates in a space that may be unfamiliar to participants, but also allows for the opening up of that space and of participant revelation.

The Nature of "Truth" in VPA Interview Material

These contextual factors complicate the underlying working assumptions (on the part of the filmmaker or the film viewer) about "truthful" disclosure, complications which dovetail with long-standing debates over "truth" in the ethnographic endeavor (Banks, 1988; Blumenberg, 1977; Heider, 2006).

There is an enduring tension between seeing ethnography as a positivist search for "the truth" versus as an open-ended exploration of the contextual and relativistic intentional worlds of the participants. In the former, the truth is something to uncover or discover, while in the latter veracity and meaning are co-created through the processes of production. Contemporary social scientists, including those working in visual media, may often see themselves as espousing the latter position, whereby "a post-positivist sociology should not be concerned with the accuracy of data, as much as with the ability of that data, to provide "a perspective on the social world from a subject situated within it" (Holliday, 2001, as

cited in Pink, 2000, p. 517). But these two orientations are not mutually exclusive: To a certain extent, accurate data is needed to properly understand a participant's situated perspective on his or her social world and to craft theories or narratives supported by that contextualizing data. We embrace aspects of both positions and find the possibilities of truth in the developing and sometimes fluctuating narrative constructions of our participants.

Anticipated shifts in and increasing depth of participants' narratives are woven into the PCE method, which assumes:

> that what people are willing and able to tell us about themselves changes as our relationships with them deepen and evolve over time. We learn what part of people's minds and behaviors they have conscious access to and what part they do not, and how these parts are dynamically related. (Hollan, 2005, p. 465)

A VPA approach requires openness and flexibility, especially in addressing and understanding difficult material that arises in interviews. Particularly when dealing with topics related to trauma, gendered violence, and stigmatization, material may often be kept hidden, since it is experienced as potentially shameful, triggering, or even dangerous. Individuals who have done something socially disvalued or socially sanctioned, or who have lost or fear losing status in their communities, may be consciously or unconsciously motivated to monitor self-presentation that may or may not align with their lived reality – both a disguising of one truth and a revelation of another. Their impression management in interviews will be deeply influenced by, and disclose, psychocultural norms of sociality and self-presentation.

Indonesian Psychocultural Factors in PCE: Minimizing Conflict and Maintaining Harmony

In over a century of anthropological and promotional literature, Javanese and Balinese societies have been portrayed as "harmonious" or "valuing harmony" to such an extent that the word has become a trope that risks occluding rather than illuminating real-life social behavior around

conflict that does occur (Anderson, 1965; Columbijn, 2001; Wikan, 1990). Maintaining social harmony does remain an important value in social interaction for many Balinese and Javanese, yet more recent studies depict considerable nuances to this value when enacted through interaction. Lestari et al. (2013) articulate the differences between "essential" and "pseudo" harmony. Essential harmony is identified as maintaining connections and compatibility by resolving conflicts peacefully through processes of empathy and togetherness. Pseudo-harmony is maintaining the *appearance* of a peaceful relationship by burying conflicts. This latter concept may be fruitfully illustrated by a Balinese pun shared during our fieldwork: when coming to a decision in a group setting, a person may call out "*Ju!*" This is short for both "*Setuju*" (I agree) and "*Meju*" (bullshit), which is to say that consensus may be formally achieved and harmony maintained on the surface while personal dissent still roils. Lestari et al. argue that this value of harmony, whether it is "essential" or "pseudo," teaches Indonesians to mask or avoid direct conflict.

Building on this, certain strategies have been identified for Indonesians (primarily but not solely Javanese) contending with acts with "conflict potential," such as an offering or invitation: these are delay; mitigation strategies of indirectness that leave the interpretation of the hearer's response or a quest for further information up to the initial speaker (as the one "responsible for initiating a potentially uncomfortable situation"; Basthomi, 2014, p. 1140); and "white lies" – all intended to maintain the face of, and preserve harmony between, both parties via a process of mutual adjustment and attunement (Basthomi, 2014). Geertz (1976, p. 244) discusses this Javanese concept of indirectness (B.J., *etok-etok*), as opposed to the Indonesian *bohong*, which maps more closely to English definition of outright lying. His respondent describes a scenario:

> "Suppose I go off south and you see me go. Later my son asks you, 'Do you know where my father went?' And you say no, *etok-etok* you don't know." I asked him why I should *etok-etok*, as there seemed to be no reason for lying, and he said, "Oh you just *etok-etok*. You don't have to have a reason".

In this case, indirectness is a preferred default mode; when the impact of a direct disclosure cannot be predicted, it is better to simply avoid an answer. This circuitous dynamic was also addressed by some of our Balinese film participants in reflexive fieldwork conversations, as in the following excerpt from a conversation among Sadra's coworkers, who feature as community members commenting on polygamy in *Bitter Honey*:

> DAMAI: We have to be polite. Oh, you have to be really slow about it. You have to go around and around first, and then you can get to the point. Sometimes in Bali you have to find trust. Then we can tell someone. If we tell someone straight out, it's looking for trouble. So, it's indeed difficult.
>
> …
>
> DEGUNG: [W]e in Bali, if we're criticizing, we don't want to be honest. … For the social, for harmony, we have to lie … according to Balinese culture, is it lying or is it truthfulness? Which one? What's that about?
>
> WAYAN: That's it, both of them have to be close to each other. Lying and truth both have to exist. Lying for our own good.
>
> DEGUNG: For peace.
>
> WAYAN: We have to be able to lie for something good.
>
> DEGUNG: In Bali that's allowed, yes? That's a good point, I think. It's okay to lie for the good thing.

"Untruthfulness" can then be a form of "truth" for Balinese talking about difficult subjects. In "Person, Time and Conduct in Bali," Geertz concluded that in Bali, "all social acts are first and foremost designed to please – to please the gods, to please the audience, to please the other, to please the self" (Geertz, 1966, p. 400). For him, this concern with the surface, essentially rendered each Balinese a *dramatis personae*: "[T] he masks they wear, the stage they occupy, the parts they play … constitute not the façade but the substance of things, not least the self" (Geertz, 1974, p. 35). In Geertz's analysis, the Balinese approach to sociality was amoral ("to please as beauty pleases, not as virtue pleases"). This decades-old conclusion resonates with some contemporary cross-cultural research, where out-group interlocutors get the sense that Indonesians are "not telling the truth" or "not fully disclosing" in social interaction (Panggabean, 2004).

Other anthropologists have argued against this "superficiality" as a misunderstanding; rather, in a Balinese moral world, it is a social and personal duty and virtue to "read the personality" of your interlocutor (Pannggabean, 2004) manage your own emotions and mask your own feelings in public or social interaction in order to promote social harmony (Wikan, 1990). As depicted through her ethnographic narrative of a young Balinese girl grieving the death of her fiancé, Wikan (1990) concludes that this social and personal duty to keep a "bright face" despite personal suffering operates within a social and cosmic belief system where negative emotions such as anger weaken the life force and threaten social harmony by inviting retaliation. Fear of affront is ever-present (and is a cultural factor involved in the shaping of obsessive–compulsive disorder in Indonesia; Lemelson, 2003); hence an appropriate response to a "bad question" (i.e., one that puts the hearer or respondent in an awkward situation where an answer risks affront) is silence or avoidance. Masking one's feelings for selfish ends is wrong but masking one's feelings to promote social harmony is a profound moral virtue. This provides a different perspective on what Geertz called "stage fright," the fear "that the public performance of this etiquette will be botched" (Geertz, 1966, p. 402). Geertz took the real fear to be that any misstep would reveal the individual behind the "standardized" public mask. Wikan, by contrast, might consider the fear to be that of a moral transgression and its unpredictable, and possibly destabilizing or dangerous, personal, social, or even cosmic repercussions.

This broad orientation to potentially upsetting topics of discussion is embodied through behaviors around "shame," discussed at length in Chapter 6. As described, each respondent has one or more aspects of their life experience about which they feel shame. So how did this psychocultural toolkit for preventing or mitigating conflict and minimizing shame play out during the process of person-centered interviews? When considering the way respondent replies changed in tenor over the course of longitudinal interviewing for the three films, it is fair to say that we encountered strategies of delay, indirectness, and putting a (metaphorical and literal) "bright face" on topics of great pain. Here, we provide three examples.

Example: Moving Past Templates of Harmony to Lived Experience of Marriage in *Bitter Honey*

We first filmed Darma's wives in 2009; at this point, he allowed their participation as long as he was present. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, all appeared cheerful in the interviews and stated that their husband was equitable, fair, kind, and gentle. In the subsequent summer shoot, Darma agreed to have his wives interviewed alone. The previous accounts soon began to crack, and the light of their actual lived experience began to shine through. By the third year of interviews, there was an almost complete reversal in their accounts; now in their estimation, Darma played favorites with wives and children, often failed to support them financially, and instrumentally maintained control over several wives through threats or actual physical violence.

After many years, some wives were forthright about the fact that, prior to filming, Darma had instructed them to highlight certain aspects of their experience as co-wives and to downplay or avoid others. Interviews began in 2009; in 2013, when discussing the film, our Indonesian colleagues – therapist Ninik Supartini and Balinese women's advocate Luh Putu Anggreni – asked Suciati how she felt about the film in progress. Suciati said the only thing that gave her pause was her husband's potential reaction to the material: when the family first entered into the film project, he told them not to mention anything negative. Anggreni joked, "First, he told you all to lie, and now you're all telling the truth!" Suciati nodded in agreement and laughed. This instruction to say only positive things can, however, be considered along the lines of masking conflict to avoid shame or disgrace and preserve marital harmony instead of simple lying; it is of further note that in the moment of discussion, the past "duplicity" is addressed through jokes and laughter, to soften a potentially awkward confrontation.

Example: Obscuring Real Reason for Budi's Placement in Orphanage

In the first meeting with the research team, Budi framed his placement in the orphanage as an educational decision based on the fact that his family could not afford to send him to public school (in Indonesia, there is a fee for public schools, which keeps many of the poorest from attending). While the family *was* facing financial hardship, this explanation did not begin to encompass the complexity of the violence and strife in Budi's home and social life, in fact more significant deciding factors, the details of which emerged later. This can similarly be considered an attempt to avoid potentially painful topics that would bring conflict to light. Here, cultural strategies of indirectness interact with contexts of social and political peril. As another participant in the *40 Years* research explained: "Why would we tell someone our activities? Who knows how they could use that information? Of course, we "*etok-etok*" so people won't know things about us." This mobilization of *etok-etok* ties everyday culturally shaped strategies of conversational indirection acts of secrecy designed to prevent being made the victim of further violence or stigma. In this case, the family's endangered social positioning and internal conflict only emerged in later interviews, when they began to trust that they did not have to fear disclosure, and felt increasingly confident that their story would be received in a compassionate and understanding manner.

Example: Indirect Reveal in *Thorn*

As opposed to being purposefully masked or downplayed, some important aspects of participant experience may emerge slowly because, due to psychocultural strategies of indirectness and delay, the filmmaker/anthropologist may not even recognize disclosures as such. Once key areas of concern are recognized, this shift can then be reflected in the questions asked and attention given to different areas of inquiry.

The *Thorn* interviews began as part of a project on neuropsychiatric disorders in Indonesia, and so from 1999 to 2002, interviews with Imam and his wife focused on his psychiatric symptoms and the family's

responses to them. As their level of trust and our degree of understanding of their situation deepened, material about their marital difficulties began to emerge that raised further questions for the team beyond the initial frame. It was only once we began to understand that the couple's marital strife circled around the legitimacy of their union, their stigmatization, and how that put Tri in a highly compromised position, that we started asking questions regarding these issues. It was only several years after we had begun interviews that the couple disclosed the more disturbing information about Tri's sex work and rape, and Imam's implication in these.

Although the film was edited to make this narrative unfold more or less directly, it unfolded quite differently for us. The disclosure of Tri's sex work was much more roundabout and difficult to interpret in the moment. It was only in collaborative analysis of the footage that the actual situation became evident, when we began to recognize a pattern of allusions to the men who might be interested in Tri or who could help the family solve their financial problems with their friendship. Once we caught on to this, we began to ask more explicit questions that garnered more explicit answers. Our slow recognition of vital information dramatically reoriented how we viewed and understood what we were hearing and observing.

This slow disclosure via PCE mirrors (although, as described above, is not being equated to) disclosure in therapeutic settings; many survivors will not immediately share their history of abuse, but rather cite another more immediate problem for discussion first (e.g., needing help to control panic attacks) and only disclose abuse much later (Good et al., 1982; Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008). Indonesian therapy clients in particular may need a significant amount of reassurance and encouragement to speak (Ampuni, 2005), so disclosure may take even longer. While cultural norms and psychological processes impact what participants discloses about themselves, there are also more individualized personal boundaries. Participants may assert their privacy for personal reasons, and of course rightly so – they are under no obligation to "tell all" and are entitled to make decisions according to their comfort level, especially as they weigh the potential future negative consequences of major disclosures. We return to this issue in Chapter 9, where we further

contemplate ethical issues surrounding our work with those who have suffered violence, trauma, and stigmatization.

As these examples show, in interviews, it was often those domains that explicitly revealed conflict and shame or broke deeply held social conventions – in other words, domains that were truly at stake – that were at first unmentioned or indirectly expressed. So, if we had simply taken people's initial accounts and stopped after a year of shooting, for example, we would have never understood what was really going on in each family, nor would we be any wiser about the topics of inquiry for each film. At the same time, the process of recognizing such cues and indirections also taught us much about the psychocultural management of difficult situations in Indonesia and pointed out the need to interpret participant statements within the context of cultural communication, history, local and national politics, and the idiosyncracitic personal characteristics and verbal and non-verbal expressions of each participant.

Psychological Truth: Memory, Self-Protection, and Paradox

In addition to Indonesian psychocultural strategies of conflict avoidance, another complicating factor to "truthful revelation" in these three films is that many of the narratives in the three films are retrospective. *40 Years* is most explicitly about memory, in that subjects at different ages are asked to reflect on how their early experiences shaped them, but both *Bitter Honey* and *Thorn* rely heavily on retrospective accounts of courtship and marriage.

Remembering is never simply retrieving whole cloth and recounting a past emotion or event. Memories are deeply shaped by present emotional and social context and neurocognitive processes (Maddox et al., 2019). Unfolding stories of trauma, violence, or stigmatization, in particular, may come out differently upon repeated tellings due to psychological processes of coping. Participants remember different things, and tell themselves and others different things, based on their comfort level, their present mental state, and their need to create coherence and meaning

out of their often chaotic or painful experiences (Konner, 2007). So, it matters when a memory is being recalled, what methods are being used to trigger or activate memory, and for what purpose (Suleiman, 2002). In the intersubjective process of generating or recording memories for an ethnographic film, memories are being reconstructed in a collaborative process and may certainly be influenced by the fieldwork context. Still, first-person narration of past events may provide insight into psychological strategies for coping with stressful or adverse environments.

Example: Lisa's Memories of Childhood

For example, in a bittersweet moment in the second half of *Thorn*, Lisa has, in effect, been abandoned by both her parents. She is also very upset about the way her mother's new partner, Wiji, verbally and physically abuses Tri during the rare times they do get together. Lisa says tearfully, "When I was little, I never saw my parents bicker." Viewers know this isn't technically true, as much of the first half of the film is comprised of Imam and Tri sharing many of the things they argue about and recalling episodes of severe distress over the state of their marriage, often with the young Lisa present. For example, as Tri talked about needing to fend off Imam with a knife when he tried to force her into unwanted sexual activity, Lisa was lying quietly on the floor nearby. Therefore, while Lisa was present for some difficult and graphic interviews, she doesn't seem to recall them, or the incidents they describe, later. The interview team does not remark upon this, but clearly, Lisa's memory of the past in that moment doesn't conform to the "reality" of what has been documented on screen.

At a young age, Lisa's coping methods may have magnified positive aspects of her social environment and minimized negative aspects. This positive spin on the past may be to a certain extent protective (Blum, 2005). If she had to acknowledge all that was going on in her family, she may have had a worse outcome in terms of mental health (Vignato, 2012). In a case like this, for us, the factual past doesn't matter so much. We are not trying to create a definitive version of

"what really happened." What's more interesting is the construction of the memory, the meaning that construction has in the present, and how that construction of memory motivates and influences behavior. There is a distinction between the vicissitudes and unreliability of an intersubjectively constructed personal memory, and the purposeful construction or suppression of social–historical memory on a wider political scale. While the latter must be contested for the sake of justice, the former provides insight into someone's psychological functioning, schemas, and understandings of the world so that idiosyncratic memories might be framed within larger meaning systems.

Defense Mechanisms

People are not just logical purveyors of information. Either consciously or unconsciously, they shape the narrative of their life based on how they think their real or imagined interlocutor will view them, to present themselves in a positive light (in psychology, this is known as the social desirability effect [Furnham, 1986; Tomaka et al., 1992]). With regard to shameful or guilt-producing emotions or behavior, they may also engage in certain psychological defense mechanisms – avoiding the inner tension that arises when there is conflict between norms, self-image, and one's desires or behavior via strategies such as minimization, denial, repression, or displacement.

Example: Imam's Rationalizations

Close readings of some interviews point to such defense mechanisms. For example, when Imam discusses his wife selling her sexual favors to men in the neighborhood (or, having them sold), he says, "Don't judge a prostitute, as a good housewife is not always better than a prostitute.… A good housewife can even be much worse than a prostitute." While this comment may seem offhand, it contains Imam's awareness of his interlocutor. Implicit is an understanding of a normative negative perception of sex work; and by extension, an understanding that many people might have a negative perception of him, who has either forced or condoned

Tri's sex work. By saying "don't judge a prostitute," he is able to at once anticipate the interviewer or viewer's scandalized or upset response to their situation, put the blame more on Tri for being the prostitute, deflect his own wrongdoing by affecting a gracious or generous attitude toward her, and assume the moral high ground with regard to the (inter)viewer's assumed reaction (and perhaps even slip in a sly accusation at his former wife).

Psychological Truth

Clearly, psychological truth is not straightforward. The shaping of memories can serve as self-protection against adverse circumstances; defense mechanisms can provide protection against outside judgment and self-recrimination. In thinking about person-centered ethnographic interviewing and "truth" onscreen, there is a notable difference between gathering cultural material and *psycho*cultural material. It can be considered that there are "accurate" accounts of cultural practices and behaviors – what is done, and what this means to the people doing it. There have been infamous episodes in anthropology's history where anthropologists were given a "false" account of culture, such as came to light in the extended Margaret Mead/Derek Freeman controversy where Freeman asserted Mead had been "hoaxed" by her informants (Côté, 2000). Indeed, respondents may have numerous reasons to provide inaccurate or incomplete information to anthropologist "outsiders," such as to preserve privacy around sacred rituals (Speed, 2006), and, of course, there may be disagreement within a culture about what things mean (Barnes & DeMallie, 2005). But when interviewing with an interest toward emotional truth, our understanding of "accuracy" must shift (Fig. 7.2).

By their very nature, emotions can be contradictory; a fundamental premise of narrative-based research methods is that there is no single absolute "empirical truth" to the emotional experience of relationships, and that, for many, psychological "truth" is of equal value to factual "truth" (Aldridge, 2015). So, for example, when the *Bitter Honey* wives report being both afraid of and in love with their husband, or when

Fig. 7.2 Suciati asks how "truthful" she should be

Tri reports being both infuriated by and pitying of Imam, they must be taken at their word; love and romance can co-exist with exploitation and domination, both equally real and valid for the women personally. Ambivalence and paradox are natural and expected, and indeed, according to person-centered ethnography described above, such "conflicting desires" become valuable information about an individual within a culture.

Leaving, Returning, and the Benefits of Longitudinality

Given these shifts and facets, the importance of longitudinality cannot be understated. Any ethnography is the condensation of many hours of conversation and observation. The films discussed in this book were shot over the course of multiple years – some almost a decade. We have now been working with Lisa and Budi from childhood through to their middle adulthood, even though the films in which they feature are long finished. By leaving and returning multiple times over the course of many years (according to academic schedules and other contingencies),

the research team became a consistent object in our participants' personal and social worlds and slowly built a foundation of trust (O'Reilly, 2012). Throughout this long-term working relationship, we tried our hardest to be trust*worthy* – to follow through on our commitments, to be clear about our plans for representing and distributing the material gathered. On the rare occasions when this trust broke down, the fractures were upsetting and disrupting for all involved (see Chapter 9 for an in-depth discussion of this). The context of these longer-term relationships created deep and lasting bonds with our participants that afforded them the time and space for a forthcoming narrativization of experience and expression of emotion.

Example: Sadra's Remorse

As discussed above, it may be that either due to the anthropologist's status as an outsider, or due to the desire to keep more embarrassing, unpleasant, or painful material a secret, or both, the full complexity of a situation remains purposefully obscured; in this case, the decision to disclose certain things comes gradually as trust is built. However, it may also be that certain aspects of a character's situation emerge gradually for the participant him- or herself, coming into his or her consciousness as the project progresses.

In cases of repression, some truths are cathected to painful memories or processes and therefore remain repressed in the subconscious. Psychoanalytic theory recommends talking about an incident or an issue repeatedly in order to "make the unconscious, conscious" (Posner, 2011); it may be that repeated person-centered interviewing has a similar effect and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, a stated goal of such interviewing is uncovering precisely this kind of "unconscious material". The process of repeated person-centered interviews, that often touch on or begin with already familiar areas of questioning, can bring things into conscious awareness or uncover material that has never been fully articulated, even in the participant's own mind. In this way, the process of filmmaking can lead to new epiphanies or new frameworks for experience that can be surprising for participants themselves.

For example, in the second year of the *Bitter Honey* project, Purniasih asked us directly for some support in ending Sadra's abusive behavior. We discussed what she understood her options to be, including having Alit, Sadra's boss, talk to him about his problematic behavior, which she attempted, or approaching the head of her village to initiate a community intervention, which she emphatically declined.

During our field visit the following year, she once again asked us for help. By this time, we had contacted and interviewed the human rights and feminist lawyer, Luh Putu Anggreni, who was quite familiar with such situations. She suggested we introduce her to Purniasih; we did, and she conducted an interview, depicted in the film. After this interview, Anggreni suggested we conduct an informal "intervention" with the couple at Alit's factory. We documented this process for potential inclusion in the film. During the mediation, Anggreni explained that both physical and emotional spousal abuse were now considered crimes, punishable with up to five years in prison. Sadra seemed surprised. Immediately after the mediation, we decided to interview Sadra one-on-one, to get his personal reflections on what had just transpired in the hopes of gaining insight into the experience of gendered violence in a polygamous marriage.

Somewhat shaken, Sadra began to connect his problems with his wife and son to the problems he experienced with his own father. Sadra reflected at length on his personal experience of witnessing domestic abuse as a child; his father beat his mother, this behavior enraged him, and yet he found himself almost helplessly repeating similar patterns. I asked him "Given that you hated your father for what he did, how does this relate to your relationship with your own son?" On camera, he had the realization that as he came to hate his father for the abuse of his mother, his own son might come to hate him, too. Upon making this connection, Sadra began to weep. Through his tears he said:

> I can't forgive my own father, even now. Because he was harsh … But I myself have been harsh with my wife and kids. So, I am worried. "Just wait until you're old," my son must definitely feel that way. That's always

Fig. 7.3 Interviewing Sadra and Purniasih's son Artawan

on my mind. I tell my wife, "If my son doesn't take care of me, don't wash away my piss or shit, just leave me there and let me die."[1]

It seems likely that Sadra may have been aware of the connections between his own behavior and his father's behavior – as encapsulated in Balinese idea of karmic inheritance (B. I. *keturunan*), for example, which attributes one's own traits, behaviors, and life events to deeds done by family members in previous generations (Keyes & Daniel, 1983). But despite drawing a heritable connection between his and his father's deeds, he may have repressed the full emotional impact of that connection because it was too painful. The timing of our discussion, and some gently probing questions, may have fully brought it to conscious awareness (Fig. 7.3).

In terms of supporting personal insight into behavioral dynamics with regards to violence and trauma or other relevant issues, longitudinal

[1] In a separate interview, Sadra's son said although he is sometimes upset by his father's behavior, he, in fact, still plans to take care of him in his old age.

person-centered interviews may give participants space to make connections about their social and historical conditions that allow them to develop a new set of understandings about their social world. This may be particularly the case when the conditions of their social world strongly limit critical questioning of their own social positioning, and open conversation on the topic with peers or local community is generally forbidden.

Emphasizing Shared Human Experience

Cultural models structure ideas, mentalities, and values that are influential, but not determinative, on personal experience, personal comportment, or personal disclosures. Furthermore, as Wikan (1990) points out, cultures provide norms but that doesn't mean these are easy to follow nor that they are followed closely. Cultural models give personal experience and behavior a particular shape and texture, but in its lived reality, subjective experience is not so schematized and individual behavior may or may not conform to these cultural models. As Kleinman and Kleinman (1991, p. 293) say, "Because of the psychophysiological grounding of experience, cultural codes cannot make of each of us precisely what they will."

This is not to minimize the role cultural competence can play in conducting sensitive interviews or analyzing the material (Kirmayer, 2012; Lende, 2009), but rather than exoticizing cultural differences, we might seek shared human experience that evokes a resonance (Kleinman & Benson, 2006; Wikan, 1990). The PCE interview can be seen as a space where social cues and norms can be interrogated to create a new sense of authenticity (Smith et al., 2015), helping both ethnographer and interviewee to get past orienting cultural models and frameworks to "understand others and be understood" (Hollan, 2008), which might ultimately result in the revelation of more personally meaningful material.

Performative Disclosures

This personal material is yet elicited and shared in a performative context. As introduced above, the idea of performativity points to the awareness of an audience; but following Austin (1975) and Butler (1988), performativity also references verbal and social processes of subject formation which instantiate what they appear to be describing. In other words, any description or representation of an experience or identity category is helping to construct or produce that experience or identity, which can then solidify through repetition and shared evaluation. In the context of person-centered ethnography adapted for film, where participant responses, narratives, and behavior can be loosely considered to be performances, either for an immediate interlocutor, an imagined film audience, or both, performativity asks us to think how the performance creates the role and subject in a dialectical way. Here we consider how interviewer, available narrative templates, and cultural conventions of emotional disclosure impact the tone, tenor, and content of participant narrative and disclosure.

Considering the Interviewer

Expanding the conversation on ethnographic pursuit of "truths," clearly what participants choose to reveal changes based on who they are talking to, in everyday life and the fieldwork encounter. How I, as the anthropologist, fit into the participants' representational system – who they think I am and what my project is about – will inform the disclosures they make; in psychology and ethnography, this is known as the expectancy effect (Berg & Derlega, 1987; Bernard, 2018). Their responses, however, are also informed by a local habitus of interaction: what is deemed socially appropriate according to psychocultural norms of deference and hierarchy. As Degung explains, the material gained in different interviews depends on who is doing the interview.

> If Bu (Mrs.) Suryani [a female Balinese psychiatrist] interviewed Pak (Mr.) Kereta, the result would be different. Do you understand? Then,

> if Pak Mahar [a male Javanese psychiatrist] interviewed him, the result would be different again. That's typical for us in Bali. It depends on who we are speaking with. If it's you who invites him, it will be different again. That's it, we have to admit that. It's just honest. We're not making it up, we're just honest.

It might be assumed that participants could feel more comfortable talking to an interviewer from their own ethnicity, culture, and/or class (Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000). This may certainly be true for some; we opened the book with "Mariana" (Chapter 1), who was so uncomfortable being interviewed by a white American that we had to end the interview. We included team members from the participants' culture whenever possible in the interviews for these films, but the "insider" was not necessarily the interlocutor who would get the most "accurate" information. In *40 Years*, being an American coming from outside the networks of violence, surveillance, and judgment against those associated with the PKI helped make Kereta comfortable enough to disclose the violence and fear he experienced. Similarly, some of the participants in *Bitter Honey* seemed more comfortable with a foreign-run crew, since they felt they would face scrutiny and judgment from a fellow Balinese. In the case of *Thorn*, the production was initially focused on transcultural psychiatric research, and a psychiatrist (Mahar) was involved, which may have encouraged the family to speak more frankly.

Narrative Templates

A key component of contemporary ethnographic research is revealing its "constructedness" and acknowledging any data as a partial truth gleaned through situated relationships (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Ruby, 1977; Strathern, 2004). But of course, "constructedness" is not just on the part of the anthropologist/filmmaker crafting an ethnographic depiction of individuals informed by certain scholarly ideas. According to psychocultural norms or personal boundaries, film participants are also actively constructing what is to be depicted on screen via different methods available to them, such as what they choose to reveal and the rhetorical strategies they use. The participant is always interpreting and negotiating

the ethnographic filmmaking process (what it means to participate, what kind of impact it might have, etc.) based on their own bodies of knowledge, adopting culturally available narrative templates or strategies. In doing this, they may call not just upon models of image management and sociality but models for family life, relationships, and personal experience they have encountered in local, national, or globalized discourse. We heard our participants compare their stories to those of shadow puppet characters and heroines in famous novels read in school. Their understanding of how to frame their own experience for the camera may also likely be influenced by available film media, which, for many Indonesians, includes local soap operas, imported Korean dramas, Bollywood films, and global reality shows. Participants may be consciously or unconsciously intrigued by the idea of recreating a genre of film they have heretofore consumed, being part of something exciting and dramatic rather than factually "true." We have had respondents ask the research team, "Should we tell it like it is or should we make it up a little bit?" Just as filmmakers, in seeking to gather compelling visual and auditory content of the participant in order to make an emotionally compelling story might be biased toward certain interview or B-roll content, so respondents might be trying to dramatically amplify the stories of their lives.

This evokes an inherent "performativity" in documentary film. Yet, just because you are "making it up a little bit" doesn't mean you won't reach the "truth" of the situation. Some have argued that even the most self-consciously performative ethnographic documentaries, known as "metafictions" where participants are asked to act out scenarios, can "mak[e] true claims about real things" (Toth, 2021). The best-known innovator of metafiction in ethnographic film was Jean Rouch, who most notably used the technique in his films *Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch & Morin, 1961), *The Human Pyramid* (Rouch, 1961), and *Jaguar* (Rouch, 1967). In the first, French individuals talk about culture, economics, and personal experience; in the second, a group of white and black lycée students in the Ivory Coast reflect on race relations and act out different "made-up" scenarios; in the third film, which appears to be ethnography but is in fact a drama loosely scripted with input from participants, three men from Niger travel to the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Rouch clearly

frames these films as "experiments" by appearing on camera; setting out the parameters within the first scenes; incorporating the screening of the film to for participants; and including the "before" and "after" of the story. Rouch champions this method because the camera "becomes a kind of psychoanalytic stimulant, which lets people do things they wouldn't otherwise do" (Levin, 1971, p. 137). But just because they wouldn't otherwise do it doesn't mean it doesn't have a deeply felt resonance to the conditions and contradictions of their lives. And the camera can act as a "psychoanalytic stimulant" even outside the method of metafiction.

Curhat

In some circumstances, participants may be telling a story they've told many times before. At other times, it is as though the truth suddenly comes pouring out, spilling beyond the previously established boundaries of what is appropriate to discuss in a direct address or appeal. While both have a use or purpose in VPA, there is a palpable difference between well-rehearsed narratives and unexpected epiphanies. In the former circumstance, as people tell and retell the story of their experience, the narrative "hardens" into a particular version, often buttressed by interlocutor response, which, over time, may take on an almost mythic, detached quality (Malkki, 1995).

The latter is typically more charged with emotion and can yield insights for both the participant and the viewer. Spontaneous, emotionally forceful revelation also has a place in Indonesian social life; cultural models for maintaining exterior harmony and saving face do not preclude scenarios for more personal and direct disclosures. One cultural model in Indonesia for sharing intimate, perhaps even painful, information beyond the conventional limits for social interaction is found in *curhat*. *Curhat* is contemporary Indonesian vernacular, short for *mencurahkan isi hati*, literally "outpouring what is in your heart," commonly glossed as "sharing feelings/confiding," and understood as part of a move toward more a more egalitarian/democratic use of language and self-expression in familial and social circles (Smith-Hefner, 2009). *Curhat*

signals the spontaneous overflow of emotions and experiences that must be given voice, and is used variously: to indicate a sharing of intimate feelings and experiences on "very sensitive topics" (Thiodanu & Sari, 2019); a delicate way to address serious matters from a personal point of view rather than explicitly advising or moralizing (Tucker, 2013); an unburdening of personal grievances or a venue for sharing gossip, secrets, and the otherwise hush-hush (as used in popular articles such as Anonymous, 2019). *Curhat* is a way to share lived experience that deviates from the ideal or socially acceptable; it is a convention for breaking psychocultural convention. Therefore, while framed as "private," *curhat* is also performative, often with a desired outcome in mind. *Curhat* encompasses both a "truthful" revelation, someone saying how they "really feel" but acknowledging this disclosure as a potentially conscious or strategic move.

The model of *curhat* thus addresses the emergent nature of subjective accounts that are gleaned during the process of ethnographic filmmaking and the way these accounts might be understood as expressing and speaking to multiple layers of experience and multiple relationships at the same time. While in every case, the participant is speaking directly to the members of the film and research team in the moment, their outpouring of emotion may simply come from a need for relief; or it might be directed toward other family members, present or absent, or expressed in the hopes that the filmmaker might recount it to a family member or even intervene. Whatever the case, *curhat* requires negotiating the intersubjective dynamics of filmmaking to create the context for spontaneous and emergent revelation, one in which participants feel safe, despite acknowledged vulnerability. At the same time, it allows that their revelation might be performative or instrumental – and if so, that in itself provides more personal and cultural information about what the disclosure might mean in the participant's life.

Example: Suciati's Lingering Grief

Some instances of *curhat* speak directly to the gender politics of what experience is allowed to be given voice. After previous interviews where

she had maintained her "bright face," in a 2010 interview, Suciati wept when recounting the sweep of her marriage, from her forced wedding to her husband's disregard of her feelings, making a direct plea to interviewers that they see her true feelings. Quoted at length here:

> When I met him, he told … me that he was unmarried … It went on for a month and I got to know him, but then it turned out my neighbors knew him. They said, "He's a gambler and he's old. You shouldn't get to know him, later you'll be trapped." [I answered] "No, I'm just friends with him," like that.
>
> I ran into him on the street. "Put your bicycle down," [he ordered], like that. … He brought me into a car. Then I realized that his intention was to marry me. I had already … heard that information about him. I was worried that later people would think that I had ruined someone's household. I asked for the truth [and said], "I want to break up with you." … So, then he immediately said, "The thing is, I don't want to be apart from you." He married me immediately. You could say that I was forced a little. Forced.
>
> He locked me up for a day, until the morning … How could I find a way to run? I was being guarded by him, by his friends, until the morning … I had to make myself realize that it had really actually happened.
>
> For the Balinese, you only marry once[2]… I tried to have a full understanding of him, even though he took other wives. Again, after my second child was only eleven days old, he took another wife. Can you imagine how much that hurt me? But I still tried to make myself able to stay with my children so that they wouldn't be neglected. No matter what he did, I tried to ignore it …
>
> In my own heart, I'm sad. But I don't want to show that. I work hard to, yes, to dress up, to wear expensive clothes. I really work hard to be able to buy those things for myself … That's all I have to entertain myself … I don't want the community to see that about me. I want them to think that I'm really happy here.

Here, Suciati's testimony displays some of the Balinese psychocultural strategies toward painful life experiences, such as maintaining a bright

[2] Suciati here means that, due to all the factors elaborated in Chapter 4, Balinese *women* only marry once, as they rarely get divorced and remarry. Men are clearly free to take additional wives and/or divorce.

and pleasing experience for the sake of self and others, but she also voices her "true feelings." In a reflexive interview in 2013, Suciati considered the dynamics of this revelation. She reiterated how Darma had instructed them to respond to interview questions, articulated the dynamics of shame that kept her from speaking out, and explained that it was the unique circumstances of the film interview that created a situation where she felt like she could no longer stay silent.

SUCIATI: My husband asked me not to talk about those kinds of things. Yes, he told us to lie and just say good things. … But when I was asked, I couldn't hold it in anymore, like that. I just told the truth when I was speaking.

NINIK: When you were holding that story inside you for years and years, how did your heart feel?

SUCIATI: Yes, it really hurt. What was it like? I wanted to – the point was, I didn't know what to do with those feelings, I didn't know what I *could* do. This is why my body is so thin, because of all the things he did to me … Because I couldn't accept them then. I used to be plump. But after I gave birth to my second child, I lost weight because when my child was only eleven days old, he got married again. Who wouldn't be shocked by that? …

NINIK: Before you talked about those experiences, what did you feel, before you talked about them to us?

SUCIATI: That was the only time I did. If someone hadn't asked me, there was no way I would have talked about it. That's why I thought about my answers. I thought, if they ask me about it, what will I say? … I never talked about it before, about having many co-wives, I never did … I never would. That would be spreading around negative words, and there was no way I was going to do that on my own.

As an interviewer and a Balinese, Anggreni's analysis is that when a particular question or line of inquiry spoke directly to the women's lived experience, they responded with honesty. In her words, "When things touched their hearts, they were frank. So, it didn't apply anymore that a husband orders his wives not to tell, or to tell only the great things."

Here, there is an interesting tension in person-centered interviewing, social norms, the drive to personal testimony, and the processes of social change. The PCE interview method can be looked at critically in that

it pushes Indonesians in a way that is culturally unfamiliar and, hence, somewhat personally destabilizing or anxiety provoking; and yet, when being conducted in this ethnographic context, it is isomorphic to a process already happening in Indonesia, where some women are pushing for an equalization and democratization in speaking up, and norms favoring male prerogative and female silence are starting to shift accordingly (Smith-Hefner, 2020). As demonstrated in the analyses of *malu* (Chapter 6), fate (Chapter 3), and *curhat*, some of the women may feel more comfortable being silent, or more used to being silent, on certain topics, but that doesn't mean that there aren't things that they want to say, things that really need to be said.

Reflexive Considerations

Curhat requires a listener, usually one perceived to be at least partially sympathetic to the speaker. In the case of our films, this is the anthropologist and/or members of the research team. Just as we understand Suciati and all of our participants to be self-consciously evaluating and analyzing what they reveal or have revealed, so do we have responsibility to reflexivity by critically scrutinizing our own choices and responses. This basic issue of reflexivity is a serious concern for visual psychological anthropologists, in some ways perhaps even more central for VPA. The material gathered can be deeply personal, so clarifying and articulating the anthropologist's perspective, method, and personal orientations and responses to it, as well as their relationship with the different participants. It allows the viewer a deeper understanding of the filmmaking method and its impact on what is said and done by participants onscreen. Here, we discuss anthropologist subjectivity, the impact of the camera, and the depiction of the ethnographic encounter as nodes of particular reflexive import during the filmmaking process.

Anthropologist Subjectivity and Response

It is a truism that ethnography is always shaped by the filmmaker/anthropologist's own personality, set of assumptions, life experiences and concerns, and even sub- or unconscious motives, responses and reactions. In psychological anthropology, as in visual anthropology, this has been a long-standing issue and focus (e.g., Banks, 1988; Good et al., 1982; Rabinow, 2007). Psychological anthropologists are trained to realize the degree to which they themselves become an embodied instrument in gathering and analyzing data. They learn to be consciously aware of, process, and bring to light their reactions to research material, in order to analyze their effects on the understanding of the material and on relationships with film participants. It has been suggested that this self-reflection and discussion with colleagues and collaborators needs to be ongoing and integrated into the anthropologist's analysis of the material (Salzman, 2002). The nearest parallel here is the psychoanalytic process, where these responses and reactions, ("counter-transferences") are discussed and linked back to aspects of the clinical encounter (Good et al., 1982).

Person-centered interviewing is not just a "rational" procedure, where the ethnographer moves through a series of semi-structured questions and then responds in a controlled manner, in order to avoid "biasing" the material. Going into the interview, the researcher has a certain understanding of the multiple contextual variables involved in cross-cultural interviewing and a certain understanding of the participant to be interviewed. Then, during the interview process, the interviewer has a continuous set of emotional, cognitive, and/or embodied responses to the material. Of course, as human beings, we have deep-seated conscious or unconscious perceptions and concepts of moral worlds and so these can be quite variable. Especially when exploring domains of fear and violence in our subjects' lives, we have had personal, sometimes visceral, reactions. Sometimes, when the participant was sympathetic or vulnerable, this has meant an overflowing empathetic response based on personal experience, or a felt need for direct intervention (discussed further in Chapter 9). But not all of our personal reactions to individuals and/or

topics that arise in the course of ethnographic interviewing can be positive. Some troubling material we encountered during the making of these three films engendered personal feelings of aversion, trepidation, distrust, and moral uncertainty or outrage. These embodied responses have the capacity to shape an interview focus and are, therefore, somewhat determinative of the material gathered. They can influence whether or not the interviewee participant feels heard and understood and shape the subsequent emphasis on certain domains over others.

In these situations, both my professional background as a clinician and my training in psychological anthropology helped. Part of the training is exploring and understanding one's counter-transference, or how one's history and personality shape one's embodied responses to the topics, processes, and conflicts encountered in a psychotherapy session. One of the positive linkages between a clinical psychodynamic or psychoanalytic-oriented psychotherapy and person-centered ethnography is the importance of maintaining an unconditional positive regard, or, at the very least, neutral and empathetic approach to understanding your participants.

Example: Imam's Justification for Tri's Sex Work

For example, once we knew about Imam's treatment of his wife, when he went on to discuss what he felt to be hardships in his own life, it was hard not to suspect he might be purposefully manipulating the team toward his own ends – to get us "on his side" and essentially defend what he had done. Internally, I had a particularly negative evaluation by his roundabout denials of profiting from Tri's sex work, such as when he said:

> If I really pimped my wife, then I should have gotten some money, right? I never got any! Never got any when my wife went out with someone else … But basically, I asked my wife to record who gave some help so that someday, when we had money, we could pay them back, that's it. If I intend to pimp my wife, I wouldn't think about returning the money, right?

Regardless of my internal, evoked reactions, my process for exploring and understanding my responses to the participants and their stories was to have as open and open-ended a discussion as possible with the rest of the research team, in order to explore the ways in which my understandings of, framings of, and personal responses to the participants and the research context were as clear as possible. These self-reflexive process of self-knowledge and self-reflection around these personal and internal responses to the fieldwork encounter – laying out our own personal biases, reactions, and interpretations to field material on topics such as violence, relationships, kinship, and sexuality for processing and understanding – can help diminish their impact and lead us back to a more objective accounting of what we are witnessing and documenting. Without them, these feelings of moral affirmation or condemnation of a member of another society's beliefs can be considered part of the colonialist/imperialist project. But with Imam, it wasn't Javanese culture that was being evaluated and possibly judged, but Imam's own behavior and rationalizations.

After we conducted this interview, the team members met and discussed our respective feelings on the matter. The story had been difficult for all of us to hear, not only because of our sympathy for Tri but also because of our anger, and frankly disgust, at Imam's justifications for his behavior. At the same time, we understood that the family was struggling under conditions of forms of structural violence such as extreme poverty and this was one avenue for a stigmatized husband and wife to bring in sufficient resources for daily survival. We felt disappointment and, indeed, shame at our own troublingly moralistic attitude toward the situation. We did include aspects of this interview in the film, although it has turned out that in screenings with diverse audiences, it is precisely Imam's stance that audiences have found most troubling.

In sum, there are multiple significant dynamics at play that influence what a participant might plan to say, or might be spontaneously moved to say, during the course of person-centered interviewing. Given that in visual psychological anthropology, a majority of these interviews are being filmed, the approach of the camera, and the relationship of the participant to the camera, is also a crucial factor.

Relationship to the Camera and Staging the Interview

Since the most significant element of our films are interviews, such footage makes up the bulk of any edit, and other observational material – shots following the participant's daily life at home, work, or in the community, or other relevant B-roll – is most often used to support what is said therein. Beyond specific questions asked, we have found that our shooting style, including camera type and placement, also impacts the filming experience for participants, which, in turn, can impact the material generated and with it, the choices later available for filmic representation in the editing process.

First, we wonder how different choices of camera placement and different shooting methods impact the way participants feel during the filmed interview, and hence, what can be expressed – in other words, whether shooting styles change their subjective experience of participation and, if so, how that impacts what they say or how they behave while being filmed. Are participants more comfortable with a particular shooting style, and hence, do they disclose more intimate information? Does one elicit a more performative response than the other (i.e., "action" and now we are "onstage"), which might lead an interviewee to focus on certain aspects of their experience based on what they think an interesting "performance" of their life would be and include?

Thorn and *40 Years* both made use of a more naturalistic group interview setting, which mimicked a conversational meeting, where a group of people, including the camera person, other members of the research team, and family members sit together with the participant being interviewed. In the naturalistic style, the camera is aimed primarily at the subject but occasionally pans around to show the others present. In this way, participants soon forget about the existence of the camera or the fact they are being filmed (even as they are also contextualizing and informing the relationships the interviewee has with those others present via group dynamics; Frey & Fontana, 1991). On the other hand, we conducted *Bitter Honey* interviews in a more formal "journalistic" style, where the participant sits in front of the camera and the interviewer and/or crew are behind or next to the camera. With this set-up, the

participant is more aware of being filmed. Perhaps counterintuitively, we have found this approach elicits stronger emotion from participants; the effect may be one similar to speaking to a psychologist where people start to disclose and even weep much more rapidly than they would in everyday conversation, maybe because of an understanding that the interviewer/psychologist is sympathetic (Hollan & Throop, 2008; Levy & Hollan, 2015).

If a more interrogatory style in formal interviews rather than conversational style seems to elicit stronger emotion, certain shooting styles may make the camera effectively "disappear," to different ends. It may be that once small cameras such as Go-Pros have been fixed in position for a while, the conscious awareness of being filmed and ostensibly the behavior this awareness elicits, will slowly fade. This may be even more the case now, due to shifts in cultural norms and new technologies of surveillance, where people are being recorded, either purposefully or passively, much more frequently (e.g., social media sharing or security). In our work in Indonesia, we have found that with single, small, cameras engaging in embedded or ongoing filming, participants do forget they are being recorded and may say things they hadn't intended to be recorded on film. But sometimes they say things even when the camera is larger and evident. Below are two examples from the films.

Example: Sadra's Extramarital Affair

On the way to a location, Rob, Degung, a male driver, and male cameraperson were with Sadra in the car. The cameraman sat in the front while Sadra, Rob, and Degung were together in the backseat. In this men-only environment, the conversation somewhat purposefully turned to sharing bawdy jokes then moved to Sadra's family life. After some teasing from Degung, Sadra somewhat reluctantly admitted that he was having an affair with a new woman, adding, "but nobody knows about it." By admitting this, Sadra seems to have forgotten about the existence of the camera, since such a disclosure, by his own account, would shame him in front of his boss and cause his wives distress. Such disclosure of

"secret" information while being recorded is not uncommon in ethnographic fieldwork (Baez, 2002). This of course raises some ethical issues, to be discussed more fully in the following chapter; here, "empathetic" interviewing or the establishment of rapport or male camaraderie may, to a certain extent, circumvent informed consent, leading participants to share parts of their life they do not actually feel comfortable exposing (Kvale, 2007).

Example: Use of Local Language

Participants, while remembering that they are being filmed, may also forget about how the footage will be analyzed and understood after the immediate shoot is finished. For example, Indonesian was the language of interviews and exchanges with the *Bitter Honey* research team and film crew, some of whom were from Java or USA and did not speak Balinese. But participants often used Balinese for more "private" exchanges while being filmed, such as in one exchange where Sulasih says she wants her honorarium for the interview immediately and Darma reassures her, "I have a good relationship with the anthropologist, he'll give me the money now." These asides are intended to be just between the two speakers – according to Indonesian/Balinese etiquette described above, such a direct conversation about wanting money would be embarrassing should it be overheard by the research team (see discussion in following chapter regarding indirect request for additional financial support). The open discussion of such matters in a different language suggests that the two are not holding in their awareness the fact that recorded video is a permanent record, one that can be reviewed by different people, not just those immediately present.

Depicting the Ethnographic Encounter

Given that film is always and already a construction of the filmmaker/ethnographer, one decision to make is how – or whether – to visually include the anthropologist and/or research team, and their role and placement vis-à-vis the film participants or characters. This has

shifted over time in our process, and this shift has reflected evolving understandings of the role of reflexivity and its representation.

As discussed, in the earlier years of *40 Years*, *Thorn*, and other simultaneous projects, we attempted to represent reflexive issues directly on screen by positioning the anthropologist/interviewer in the same visual frame as the subjects with wide angle observational shots, even during interviews. We did this in part to meet the ethnographic goal of holism. Holism usually refers to providing a comprehensive and contextualized account of subjects' lives, but when dealing with reflexivity, it also refers to an exhaustive account of the research process, from conception and theorizing, through fieldwork, to the final output, and assessments of or reaction to that output. Those writing ethnographies have found creative ways to account for the ethnographer's positionality and subjectivity, represent the multiple aspects of fieldwork and those domains outside research per se that were nevertheless influential in the process and outcome, and put forth aspects of theory and methodology instantiated in the research (Marcus, 1995). A film analog to this holistic effort might be the aforementioned *Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch & Morin, 1961) which attempted to represent the entire Gestalt and course of the project (see process summarized in Heider, 1976).

In subsequent years, we moved away from these observational wide shots in interviews toward shots focused on the participant, although interviewer questions and commentary could occasionally be heard from off camera. This put less emphasis on the ethnographic encounter. While this shift risked losing a degree of self-reflexivity and transparency, as it removed the ethnographer and interview context from visual scrutiny, we felt close up shots on participants' faces better aligned with a person-centered ethos that forefronts the participant's perspective and experience (Lemelson & Tucker, 2017). Ultimately, it might be that, in some ways, person-centered methodology is at odds with a more holistic *visual* style. This doesn't mean that it forecloses reflexivity; MacDougall has explained through his concept of "deep reflexivity" (MacDougall, 1998) how filmmaking is inherently reflexive, whether or not we include the image of the maker in the shots. *All* images in a film refer back to their makers, and thus must be understood as including them (Henley, 2020). Reflexivity in film then goes far beyond the deliberate drawing of an audience's

attention to the filmmaking process within the body of the film. Still, if we have found that reflexive holism is less desirable or even impossible within the body of a person-centered film, then the holism might come with the integration of the films with written ethnography. Those important aspects of the story or the encounter that couldn't make it into the film can be addressed in writing. This is, in fact, one purpose of this book.

By the time we started shooting *Bitter Honey*, very few shots included the anthropologist/interviewer and instead focused on the participants. As *Thorn* was shot over a dozen years, beginning when we were shooting *40 Years* and continuing through the beginning production phase of *Bitter Honey*, the footage included both styles of shooting. In *Thorn*, though, since we made a conscious decision not to visually include me in the film, we needed to carefully edit around those shots and instead use inserts and B-roll to cover those parts of the interview where I had been visible. Of course, what seems to be an editing decision results in the changing of the record of what transpired during this interview(s) for film viewers. The following chapter goes deeper into our processes of editing, the effects editing choices can have on participants, and the implications they have for viewers.

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